

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6813

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 STATE 16003/1

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR VS

SUBJECT: INTERVIEW

PASS USIA AND OOD

1. THERE ARE STILL SOME ENTERPRISING JOURNALISTS, REGRETTABLY
INTHIS CASE NOT AN AMERICAN BUT A DANE, WHO WILL GO OUT AND
GET A GOOD STORY. IN CASE IT HAS NOT COME TO DEPARTMENT'S
ATTENTION FOLLOWING IS TEXT FILED FROM SAIGON SEPTEMBER 5
BY NIELS R. LAUGESSEN, CORRESPONDENT OF COPENHAGEN DAGBLADET.

2. BEGIN QUOTE: ARRIVING IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND HAVING A

LOOK AT THE SITUATION WAS RATHER SHOCKING FOR US. AT HOME
WE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT MR. NIXON'S VIETNAMIZING OF THE WAR
DID NOT WORK, AND THAT IT WAS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME BEFORE
VIETCONG COULD COMPLETE THE LIBERATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM.
AND THEN WE FIND THAT IT IS IN REALITY QUITE THE OTHER WAY ROUND,
AND THAT THE POPULATION BY NO MEANS WANT ANY COMMUNIST
"LIBERATION".

THESE REMARKABLE STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD BY ONE
OF THE POLISH MEMBERS OF ICCS, THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION
FOR SUPERVISION OF THE CEASE FIRE IN VIETNAM.

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SINCE FEBRUARY POLAND TOGETHER WITH HUNGARY, INDONESIA, AND UNTIL RECENTLY CANADA, HAS BEEN CONTROLLERS OF THE BLOODY CEASE FIRE. ONE OF THE POLISH MEMBERS OF ICCS HAS AGREED TO TELL ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES AND HIS IMPRESSION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

HE HAS NO PLANS OF FOLLOWING ONE OF HIS HUNGARIAN COLLEAGUES WHO HAS DEFECTED DURING HIS STAY IN SOUTH VIETNAM. ON THE CONTRARY HE WANTS TO RETURN TO HIS FAMILY IN POLAND AND HAS THEREFORE DEMANDED ABSOLUTE ANONYMITY AS A CONDITION OF THIS INTERVIEW.

THE VIETNAMIZATION WORKS

LAUGESSEN: WHAT IS YOUR ESTIMATE OF THE CEASE FIRE AGREEMENT?

POLISH OFFICER: THE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN MEMBERS ARRIVED HERE

FILLED WITH PROPAGANDA ABOUT THE CEASE FIRE BEING A GREAT VICTORY FOR VIETCONG. THEREFORE WE WERE VERY SURPRISED TO SEE THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY WAS SO STRONG. AND THE SOLDIERS' MORALE HAS IMPROVED, THE MANY DESERTIONS FORMERLY HEARD ABOUT HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO AN END, AND ONE NOTICES AN INCREASING NATIONAL FEELING.

LAUGESSEN: THE PARIS AGREEMENTS PROVIDE THAT ELECTIONS ARE HELD

"AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" TO THE SETTLEMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S POLITICAL FUTURE. WHEN DO YOU THINK THEY WILL BE HELD?

POLISH OFFICER: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT BOTH PARTIES NOW WANT TO

CONSOLIDATE THEIR POWER AND CREATE A STRONG ADMINISTRATION IN THE AREAS THEY CONTROL. SOUTH VIETNAM HOLDS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AUGUST 26, AND VIETCONG WILL MOST CERTAINLY ARRANGE SMALL LOCAL ELECTIONS IN THE AREAS THEY CONTROL. BUT THE COMMUNISTS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN A GENERAL ELECTION. THEY WOULD LOSE, AS IT IS. EVEN IF VIETCONG AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCE CONTROL 30 PERCENT

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OF THE COUNTRY ONLY HALF A MILLION OUT OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S 18 MILLION INHABITANTS LIVE IN THEIR AREAS, THE REST HAVE FLED. I HAVE NOTICED AN ENORMOUS ANTI-COMMUNIST FEELING EVERYWHERE IN SOUTH VIETNAM. FOR EXAMPLE WE HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO DEMONSTRATIONS IN HUE THAT MIGHT HAVE HAD SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES IF THE POLICE HAD NOT INTERFERED SO QUICKLY.

LAUGESSEN: BUT WERE THE DEMONSTRATIONS NOT ARRANGED BY THE SOUTH

VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT?

POLISH OFFICER: I KNOW THAT PART OF THE PRESS HAS SAID SO, BUT

THAT IS QUITE WRONG. THERE IS NO DOUBT AT ALL THAT THESE
DEMONSTRATIONS
WERE QUITE SPONTANEOUS. WHILE SOUTH VIETNAM WAS HAVING AN UN-
STABLE POLITICAL SITUATION WITH QUICKLY CHANGING GOVERNMENTS
HEADED BY GENERALS, VIETCONG HAD AN ENORMOUS GREAT INFLUENCE.
I AM CONVINCED THAT IT WAS THE UNSUCCESSFUL TET OFFENSIVE IN 1968
THAT WAS THE TURNING POINT. INHABITANTS OF HUE HAVE TOLD ME THAT
MANY OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE OLD IMPERIAL TOWN WERE STRONGLY
OPPOSED TO THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT. BUT THE SYMPATHY FOR VIET-
CONG DISAPPEARED WHEN THE COMMUNISTS IN FEBRUARY 1968 LIQUIDATED
5,800 OF THE INHABITANTS WHO WERE FOUND LATER IN THE HORRIBLE
MASS GRAVES. VIETCONG ITSELF WAS HOISTED BY ITS OWN PETARD
BY THE BLOODY TERROR. THEIR PRESENT POLICY IS A TRAGEDY. WHY
BLOW SCHOOLS, WHY POISON THE VILLAGE WELLS,
WHY ALL THESE LIQUIDATIONS? IT SIGNIFIES THAT THEY ARE DESPERATE.
INSTEAD THEY SHOULD HAVE CONCENTRATED ON POINTING OUT THE FAILURES
AND SHORTCOMINGS THAT STILL EXIST IN THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY.

DISTORTED NEWS COVERAGE:

LAUGESSEN: VIETCONG HAS APPARENTLY WON GREAT SYMPATHY IN THE

WESTERN WORLD. WHY SO?

POLISH OFFICER: HANOI HAS GREATLY PROFITEERED BY IDEALISTS IN

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THE WEST, BY THE BERTRAND RUSSELL TRIBUNALS, DEMONSTRATIONS
AND THE LIKE, AT THE SAME TIME SOUTH VIETNAM HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN
OPEN COUNTRY FOR JOURNALISTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD EVEN THE MOST
CRUCIAL ONES, WHILE NORTH VIETNAM HAS GRANTED VISAS CHIEFLY TO
PRO-COMMUNISTS PRESS. THEREFORE THE NEWS COVERAGE HAS BEEN
DISTORTED. AND THE OFFICIAL NAME OF VIETCONG. "THE LIBERATION
FRONT", HAS ALONE ATTRACTED MANY PEOPLE. THE MANY AMERICAN
SOLDIERS MAY HAVE BEEN DECISIVE. THEY WERE A FOREIGN ELEMENT
WITH ONLY A LIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE VIETNAMESE CULTURE. THAT
GAVE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS WHICH VIETCONG COULD USE IN THE
PROPAGANDA.
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ACTION EA-14

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R 061150Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6814

UNCLAS SECTION 2 OF 2 STATE 16003/2

THIEU IS NO PUPPET:

LAUGESSEN: HOW MUCH BACKING HAS PRESIDENT VAN THIEU IN THE

POPULATION TODAY?

POLISH OFFICER: I MUST ADMIT THAT NOW HE ENJOYS GREAT RESPECT HERE.

HE HAS ALSO CHANGED STYLE. FORMERLY HE SELDOM APPEARED IN PUBLIC BUT LATELY HE HAS BEGUN TO TAKE PART IN MASS MEETINGS. HE MADE UNANNOUNCED VISITS TO THE OUTPOSTS, LIKEWISE HE WENT TO AN LOC TO VISIT THE INVESTED GOVERNMENT TROOPS WHILE THE TOWN WAS SUBJECT TO VIOLENT NORTH VIETNAMESE ATTACKS. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE MANY REFORMS OF VAN THIEU'S HAS CONTRIBUTED MUCH TO GIVING HIM GREAT POPULARITY. IT WAS ESPECIALLY THE LAND-REFORMS, MAKING THE FARMERS FREEHOLDERS, THAT WAS A CRUSHING BLOW FOR VIETCONG. AT THE SAME TIME HE HAS SHOWN THAT HE IS ABSOLUTELY NOT A PUPPET OF USA. AT THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN PARIS HE OPPOSED AGAINST THE UNFAVORABLE CEASE FIRE TERMS, EVEN IF HE WAS UNDER STRONG AMERICAN PRESSURE. THIS HAS INCREASED THE PRESIDENT'S REPUTATION AMONG THE POPULATION.

LAUGESSEN: WHO ARE HIS NEAREST POLITICAL RIVALS?

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POLISH OFFICER: I CANNOT SEE ANY. WHEN I ARRIVED I THOUGHT THAT

GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH MIGHT BECOME AN UNIFYING CHARACTER.
BUT HE IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE TO THIEU --
AND THAT IS OF COURSE ALSO THE REASON WHY VIETCONG WITH MIGHT AND
MAIN TRY TO GET HIM DETHRONED.

VIOLATION OF THE CEASE FIRE:

LAUGESSEN: TO RETURN TO THE CEASE FIRE AND THE TASK OF THE CONTROL

COMMISSION. WHY DID CANADA WITHDRAW FROM THE ICCS, SO THEY
NOW HAVE TO BE REPLACED BY PERSIA?

POLISH OFFICER: FOR SEVERAL REASONS. AMONG OTHERS BECAUSE THE

TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT WAS CRITIZED IN PARLIAMENT AT HOME FOR THE
COUNTRY'S PARTICIPATION. BUT THE MAIN REASON WAS THE DIFFICULTY
IN COMING TO AN AGREEMENT AS TO WHO WAS VIOLATING THE CEASE FIRE.

LAUGESSEN: POLAND AND HUNGARY HAVE THE REPUTATION OF ALWAYS

GIVING THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE THE BLAME.

POLISH OFFICER: YOU MUST TRY TO UNDERSTAND US. WE CANNOT TELL THE

TRUTH. THE CONTENTS OF OUR REPORTS IS DECIDED NEITHER HERE IN
SAIGON,
OR IN WARSAW OR BUDAPEST. THIS IS POWER POLITICS, AND AS LONG AS
MOSCOW SUPPORTS VIETCONG THERE IS NOTHING TO DO ABOUT IT.

LAUGESSEN: WHAT IS YOUR PERSONAL OPINION OF THE MANY VIOLATIONS

OF THE CEASE FIRE? WHO IS THE MAIN RESPONSIBLE?

POLISH OFFICER: I ESTIMATE THAT ABOUT 75 PER CENT OF THE REAL

MILITARY CONFLICTS ARE DUE TO NORTH VIETNAM AND VIETCONG, WHILE
THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE-FOURTH. TO
THIS COMES THE PURE TERROR-ATTACKS WHICH ARE ALL OF COMMUNIST
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ORIGIN.

LAUGESSEN: INDONESIA HAS EXCHANGED HER FIRST CONTINGENT AFTER

SIX MONTHS WORK IN ICCS. WHEN WILL POLAND AND HUNGARY
EXCHANGE THEIRS?

POLISH OFFICER: THE HUNGARIANS SAY THEY WILL STAY HERE FOR A

YEAR. BUT WE ARE JUST EXCHANGING OUR REPRESENTATIVES. WHEN
WE ALL STAY HERE AT LEAST SIX MONTHS IT IS DUE TO THE SPECIAL
DIPLOMATIC RIGHTS WE ARE ABLE TO OBTAIN AT HOME AFTER HALF A YEAR
ABROAD. WE CAN FOR EXAMPLE GET A CAR WITHOUT TAXATION AND
EXCISE AND WAITING LIST.

LAUGESSEN: WHAT WILL BE THE FUTURE OF THIS UNFORTUNATE COUNTRY?

POLISH OFFICER: I THINK THERE WILL BE NO PEACE FOR THE PRESENT,

UNFORTUNATELY. THE MILITARY STRENGTH OF SOUTH VIETNAM MAY RENDER
A COMMUNIST MILITARY VICTORY IMPOSSIBLE, AND A POLITICAL SOLUTION
THROUGH A COALITION GOVERNMENT IS UNTHINKABLE. TO THIS END
THE EXPERIENCES FROM BOTH HANOI AND EASTERN EUROPE AFTER WORLD
WAR II ARE TOO TRAGIC. AND THEY ARE REMEMBERED HERE IN VIETNAM.
THEREFORE THE RESULT WILL RATHER BE A DIVIDING OF THE COUNTRY.
THERE ARE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS
WILL STAY HERE. AND HANOI HAS ALSO BEGUN TO SEND WOMEN AND
CHILDREN DOWN HERE IN ORDER TO INHABIT THE DESERTED AREAS THEY
CONTROL. UP TO NOW THE COMMUNISTS MAY HAVE OPPOSED GENERAL
ELECTIONS. BUT MILLIONS OF VIETNAMESE HAVE VOTED ALL THE SAME --
WITH THEIR FEET. END QUOTE

3. THIS ARTICLE BY MR. LAUGESSEN IS SYNDICATED TO A TOTAL OF
11 DANISH NEWSPAPERS WITH A TOTAL CIRCULATION OF APPROXIMATELY
300,000 TO 500,000 COPIES.

4. SURELY DEPARTMENT, DOD, AND USIA CAN FIND WAYS TO USE
THIS TO THROW SOME LIGHT IN BENIGHTED PLACES.

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